

## AMENDMENT

### IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend Claim 1 as follows:

- B1
1. (Twice Amended) An electron microscope, comprising:  
a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;  
a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber;  
a minicolumn; and,  
a mini-environment housing said minicolumn.

Amend Claim 6 as follows:

6. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 5, wherein said valve comprises a sealing plate that is pivoted on a shaft, which shaft is capable of elevation motion.

B2 [Amend Claim 7 as follows]

7. (Twice Amended) An electron microscope, comprising:  
a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;  
a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber; and  
a minicolumn non-translatably positioned inside said main chamber.

[Amend Claim 8 as follows]

8. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 7, further comprising a removable back plate attached to said main chamber, and wherein said minicolumn is connected to the removable back plate.

[Amend Claim 9 as follows]

9. (Twice Amended) The electron microscope of claim 7, further comprising at least one tilted minicolumn situated inside said main vacuum chamber at a tilt with respect to a perpendicular to a surface of the stage.

Amend Claim 11 as follows:

B3 11. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 7, further comprising a vacuum pump situated inside the main vacuum chamber and external to and connected to the minicolumn.

Amend Claim 13 as follows:

By 13. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 12, further comprising a radial pivot, and wherein said holding arm is connected to said radial pivot.

(Amend Claim 14 as follows:)

14. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 12, further comprising a linear motion carriage, and wherein said holding arm is connected to said linear motion carriage.

Amend Claim 16 as follows:

B5 16. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 15, wherein said at least one additional minicolumn has a tilt with respect to a perpendicular to a surface of the turntable stage.

Amend Claim 21 as follows:

B6 21. (Amended) An electron microscope comprising:  
a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;  
a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber; and  
a plurality of minicolumns non-translatably positioned inside said main chamber.

(Amend Claim 22 as follows:)

22. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 21, wherein at least one of said minicolumns is situated inside the main vacuum chamber at a tilt with respect to a perpendicular to a surface of the stage.

Amend Claim 25 as follows:

B7 25. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 24, wherein at least one of said minicolumns has a tilt with respect to a perpendicular to a surface of the stage.

**Please add the following claims:**

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27. The electron microscope of claim 1 wherein the mini-environment further comprises a back plate.

28. The electron microscope of claim 27 wherein the minicolumn is connected to the back plate.

29. The electron microscope of claim 5 wherein the mini-environment further comprises a back plate.

30. The electron microscope of claim 29 wherein the minicolumn is connected to the back plate.

31. The electron microscope of claim 7 wherein the minicolumn is disposed at a tilt with respect to a perpendicular to a surface of the stage.

32. The electron microscope of claim 31 wherein the tilt is variable.

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38